

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service
Washington 25, D. C.

July 23, 1947

For your information

TO STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS OF FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, DELAWARE, PENNSYLVANIA, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, CONNECTICUT, TENNESSEE, AND OHIO

Subject: Atlantic Coast Migratory Movement

THE SITUATION

As We See It:

Did you ever sit out a hurricane in Florida? In sequence--storm warnings; the first big blow and downpour; a sudden absolute quiet, but tinged with ugly saffron sky and more warnings; then finally more big wind and the rain that never seems to hit the ground. You tie things down, board up the windows, check up on supplies. You can't relax and just wait it out, for you have to keep peering out to see what's coming next. What's all that got to do with the farm labor situation? Of course, its just an analogy we conjured up, but we think it fits.

We've checked some 12,000 migrants through the Information Stations at Grosse, Florida, and Little Creek, Virginia. Perhaps half that many more that we didn't catch have moved up the coast. The potatoes and early beans have been harvested with ample labor and little or no loss as far north as Delaware. Some three or four thousand migrants have gone into New York and helped with plantings and small fruit harvest. The first rush is over. Normally, this week we would be hitting the beginning of the peak harvest period in the Middle Atlantic vegetable and truck crop area. The season is a little late, so there is still the lull before the final blow when tomatoes, beans, more potatoes, sweet corn and fruit will all be ready. That's when all the growers will want all of their labor at once.

State Supervisors and their farm labor assistants in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey and New York, are looking out the window for the change in the wind. Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware have enough workers to do the job--if they can hold them for another week or ten days. But work has been slack for a week or two. Workers are restless and, even with future commitments, it is hard to hold them. They want to move on on the chance of something to do farther north. Some have tried it and come back to Georgetown or Pocomoke to "sit it out." Others are still moving. In the meantime New Jersey and New York are in a receptive mood, knowing full well that not enough labor is on hand to meet rapidly approaching needs.

Yes, indeed, it's the lull before the final blow. And it's the time for strong cooperative effort and good sportsmanship between State farm labor offices. We think there is evidence that enough migrant labor is in the area to harvest the crops -- IF the supply is properly distributed and utilized.

That's the reason this office has Pittman, Andersen, Stout and Nealy out in the area this week to help. They are guided by the following policy:

1. Ascertain the present situation.
2. Determine future needs.
3. Help keep labor where it is needed.
4. Help locate surplus labor and move it to areas of need.
5. In no case to suggest moving workers to other States without knowledge and consent of local Extension and Farm Labor officials.

As The States Report It:

From North Carolina Floyd White wires "Columbia Camp, Belcross, Weeksville, Grandy closed, harvest complete. Migrant labor moved north." And, that winds up one of the smoothest moving and most efficient programs for handling migrant farm labor that we have any record of.

In Virginia on the "Shore" the situation is about the same as a week ago. Potato digging is complete except in upper Accomac County. Some green tomato picking and ripe tomato harvest will be under way by July 25. Enough workers are available to complete potato harvest. Some difficulty in holding workers during interim between potatoes and ripe tomatoes. About 125 workers moved into Accomac County last week for tomato work, but 300 potato pickers, who did not want to pick tomatoes, moved out of the county to points north. Even though work is slack at the moment, this is definitely not a surplus area and additional workers may have to be recruited for the tomato crop which is heavy.

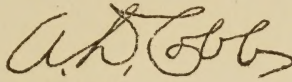
Maryland reports about 4,000 migrants on hand. All camps are full and all housing filled in the lower shore counties. In the upper shore counties a break in the cucumber market has created a temporary labor surplus. Potato digging in Worcester County is about half completed and a car shortage is slowing up digging. Ripe tomato harvest starting this week. Heavy sweet corn yield in prospect. Paul Nystrom reports that workers are better satisfied, more willing to work at anything and seem tired of roaming. There is definitely no surplus of labor in Maryland at the moment except in a few local areas. Future needs will be determined largely by the failure of blight to show up on tomatoes and the price cannerys are willing to pay for the crop. Keep in touch with Bill Hillman, Pocomoke City, phone 410, for information on any crews available for placement farther north. As of July 22, O. W. Nealy will join forces with Bill at the Pocomoke Information Station. Nealy will be instructed: (1) to check with crews who headed north and have returned to Maryland and help get them placed; (2) help see that crews with definite commitments farther north are not interfered with in moving out on time; (3) assist in getting crews lined up to pull sweet corn. His job will be not to take the place of any Maryland personnel, but to supplement their efforts through his personal knowledge of crews and their leaders.

From Delaware's Bill Henderson, County Agent at Georgetown, comes word that bean picking will continue for another week. A few ripe tomatoes are being picked. A bumper tomato crop is in prospect but labor requirements are still uncertain. There has been little contracting for tomatoes. Cannerys report stocks of juice in warehouses from the 1946 pack. Prospects for lowered prices may affect the use of labor. All camps are open but none filled to capacity. Some additional labor can be used in all three counties by August 1. Information on placements and camp facilities can be secured from Edward Passwaters for Staytonville Camp at Harrington, phone 467 or Greenwood phone 6441; Georgetown Camp, W. C. Sloan, phone Georgetown 216 or 287-J-1; Leipsic and Woodside Camps, F. P. Neylan, Dover phone 2886; Middletown Camp, Kenneth Branner, Middletown phone 92.

New Jersey situation unchanged from last week. H. O. Andersen and Jack Taylor are touring areas in that State which will use large numbers of workers by August 1. Look for detailed report from Andy next week.

The same goes for New York where C. W. E. Pittman is winding up a ten-day tour of important farm labor centers and will have a report ready next week.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A. D. Cobb'.

A. D. Cobb
Northeastern Area Director
Recruitment and Placement Division
Extension Farm Labor Program

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